Approved For Release 2007/06/14 : CIA-RDP99-00498R000100160076-4

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE C 7

THE WASHINGTON POST
7 January 1979

STAT

David S. Broder

Domestic Fallout

For all the public outcry and threatened lawsuits about President Carter's decision to break diplomatic relations with Taiwan and recognize the Peking government, there appears to be far greater worry inside the administration about the political fallout from the crisis in Iran.

The view is that the China debate is a tempest in a teapot compared with the storm that could break if the Iranian upheaval has as unhappy an ending as now appears likely.

In conversations, Carter aides suggest at least half a dozen reasons for fearing the domestic fallout from the shah's troubles may prove to be more serious than the China controversy.

• Despite the efforts of some right-wing organizations to whip up the issue, there is no way to tag Carter with being the man who "lost China." That happened 30 years ago, and the reality of Peking's regime being the government of China was acknowledged first by Richard Nixon, not Jimmy Carter.

As far as the charge of a "sellout" of Taiwan, Carter aides insist the diplomatic files would show that Nixon and Henry Kissinger indicated to Peking that, when the time was right, they would grant formal recognition on terms less favorable than Carter obtained.

By contrast, the shah has enjoyed a press in this country almost as favorable as Chiang Kai-shek did 30 years ago. He was viewed by the American public as sitting securely on his throne when Carter came to power. Thus, the question of who lost Iran is far more plausible in domestic politics.

• Second, while recognizing China can be seen as an effective anti-Soviet move in the world balance of power, the undermining of the shah has clearly negative implications for the U.S. strategic position vis-à-vis Russia. There is no disguising this as a major setback for American interests.

• Third, the Soviets may well be tempted to exploit the Iranian situation, even if their role in fomenting the anti-shah movement is equivocal. Mischief-making in Iran or pressure tactics against other Persian Gulf states would give an important argument to the foes of Carter's prime diplomatic project, the ratification of a strategic arms (SALT) agreement with Russia.

• Fourth, the events in Iran provide an opening for critics of Carter's human-rights policy. Already, they are asserting that the shah's troubles were increased by the criticism of his police-state tactics by Carter administration officials. The larger question of the human-rights policy—and the different application of it to different countries—seems certain to be revived by the Iranian problems.

• Fifth, the events in Iran have raised the question of the performance of the Central Intelligence Agency in this administration. During his campaign, Carter promised to take personal responsibility for any malfunctioning in the intelligence agencies. His critics will not allow him to escape responsibility for the controversial appointment of his classmate, Admiral Stansfield Turner, as CIA director. Nor will they permit the Democrats to avoid responsibility for the inhibitions placed on the CIA by new executive and congressional guidelines.

• Sixth, the Iran crisis threatens to revive the Vietnam-era debate between hard-liners and soft-liners in the Democratic Party. Worse, evidence of that debate within the administration is already becoming public, in the exchange of recriminations between the National Security Council and the State Department. State Department "doves" blame National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski for locking the United States to a fatal embrace of another "doomed dictator," while Brzezinski loyalists blame the State Department for undercutting U.S. support of the shah with gloomy predictions about his prospects.

Ultimately, the whole affair revives the question of the competence of Carter's management of foreign policy—an issue that had been muted since last fall's Camp David summit.

For all these reasons, the Carter administration seems more nervous about Iran than about the China fallout.

Approved For Release 2007/06/14 : CIA-RDP99-00498R000100160076-4